

**Special Projects and Demonstrations
for Providing Vocational Rehabilitation
Services to Individuals with Disabilities
(CFDA No. 84.235)**

I. Legislation

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, P.L. 93-112, Title III, Part B, Section 311 (a)-(d), as amended by P.L. 102-569 and P.L. 103-73 (29 U.S.C. 777a (a)-(d)); Title VIII, Section 802 (g) (29 U.S.C. 797a (g)) (expires September 30, 1997).

II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1974	\$1,000,000	1988	\$26,110,000 <u>4/</u>
1975	1,295,000	1989	26,720,000 <u>4/</u>
1980	9,568,000	1990	42,145,000 <u>5/</u>
1981	9,765,000	1991	28,391,000 <u>6/</u>
1982	8,846,000	1992	41,526,000 <u>7/</u>
1983	9,259,000	1993	30,558,000 <u>8/</u>
1984	11,235,000 <u>1/</u>	1994	30,558,000
1985	18,995,000 <u>1/</u>	1995	30,558,000 <u>9/</u>
1986	27,945,000 <u>2/</u>	1996	24,941,000 <u>9/</u>
1987	24,860,000 <u>3/</u>		

1/ Includes funding for the Spinal Cord Injury Program administered by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).

2/ Includes \$5,000,000 for the Spinal Cord Injury Program, \$718,000 for the South Carolina Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center, and \$4,785,000 for the Oregon Hearing Institute.

3/ Includes \$5,000,000 for the Spinal Cord Injury Program, and \$450,000 for Model Statewide Transitional Planning Services for Severely Handicapped Youth Projects.

4/ Includes \$5,000,000 for the Spinal Cord Injury Program and \$475,000 for Model Transition projects.

5/ Includes \$5 million for the Spinal Cord Injury Program, and \$14,814,000 earmarked to establish Comprehensive Head Injury Centers.

6/ Includes \$5 million for the Spinal Cord Injury Program administered by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).

7/ Includes \$6 million earmarked for a Hearing Research Center, and \$5 million for the Spinal Cord Injury Program.

8/ In FY 1993, the Spinal Cord Injury Program was transferred to the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

9/ Amounts for 1995 and 1996 include appropriations for Supported Employment Projects, a separate activity prior to FY 1996.

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

The goal of Special Projects and Demonstrations for Providing Vocational Services to Individuals with Disabilities is to develop innovative methods and comprehensive service programs to help individuals with disabilities achieve satisfactory vocational outcomes. These programs use a variety of approaches to improve vocational outcomes including supported employment, transitional planning, and increased opportunities for consumer choice and develop innovative methods of serving unserved and underserved populations. These current-funded programs make discretionary awards on a competitive basis to public and nonprofit community rehabilitation programs, designated state units, and public or private organizations.

It is expected that successful project results will be disseminated and replicated, in whole or in part, to resolve or alleviate rehabilitation problems that are nationally significant or common to several states.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Services Supported

In FY 1996, a total of 107 projects--74 continuation projects and 33 new projects--were funded under the Special Demonstrations Program. Among the continuation projects funded in FY 1996 were Consumer Choice Demonstration projects (7 projects), Transitional Rehabilitation Services for Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance and Serious Mental Illness (9 projects), Community-Based Supported Employment (SE) projects (18 projects), Statewide SE Demonstration projects (10 projects), and SE Projects for Individuals Who Are Deaf and Low-Functioning (3 projects). The program also continued support to 18 field-initiated demonstration projects.

In FY 1996, the program also funded 15 new projects to support the transition of youth with disabilities and 15 new field-initiated demonstration projects. In addition, FY 1996 was the first year the Special Demonstrations program contributed to the jointly funded School-to-Work Technical Assistance project¹, aimed at improving the access of individuals with disabilities to appropriate transition programs and School-to-Work Opportunities systems. At Congress' direction, the Special Demonstrations Program also provided assistance to enable two previously funded regional head injury centers to continue serving as national resource centers to help states improve services to survivors of traumatic brain injury.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

¹This project is jointly funded under the Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act.

RSA has gathered limited performance information on community-based supported employment projects, which are required to provide annual performance information. Data reported by 14 community-based projects show that in their first two years of funding (FY 1992 and 1993), 573 persons were placed in competitive employment with an average hourly wage of \$5.45. RSA expects that the national supported employment project will build on the experience of the community-based projects by promoting the nationwide dissemination and replication of exemplary supported employment models and practices.

Limited performance information is also available for the seven choice demonstration projects authorized under Title VIII. In FY 1993, the Department funded a contract to monitor and assist in the implementation of the choice demonstration projects. This contractor provided technical assistance to projects, established a uniform data reporting system, documented problems encountered during implementation, and assessed each project's progress. As of July 31, 1995 (22 months into the project period), these projects had accepted 1,105 persons for service. Of these, 104 had their cases closed because they found employment, and 238 were placed in employment.

Anecdotal evidence from projects funded under Sections 311(a) and (b) suggests that certain projects have been successful in demonstrating rehabilitation methods that are disseminated and replicated or adapted by other service providers. For example, one project developed innovative approaches to the transition of young adults with severe disabilities. In addition to placing and maintaining in employment approximately 60 individuals with disabilities, the project has created and disseminated training materials and provided technical assistance to projects nationwide on the "natural support" approach to the transition of individuals with disabilities. (Natural support is support that is provided to an individual with a disability in the workplace by employers, co-workers, or other persons who are not paid service professionals.)

IV. Planned Studies

In accordance with the statutory requirement that the Department conduct an evaluation of the choice demonstration projects, the Department recently engaged a contractor to determine the effectiveness of the choice approach in improving rehabilitation processes and outcomes. The contractor will follow the projects for the duration of their funding. Results of this evaluation are expected in March 1998.

V. Sources of Information

1. Program files.
2. Evaluation of Special Rehabilitation Projects and Demonstrations for Severely Disabled Individuals: Final Report (Winchester, MA: Harold Russell Associates, Inc., February 1987).
3. Internal Control Review: Special Projects and Demonstrations for Providing Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Individuals with Severe Handicaps: Final Report (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, March 1991).

VI. Contacts for Further Information

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